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New England Interstate Water Pollution Control Commission:
Tribal and State WETLANDS Inspector Training
Proposal
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NEIWPCC Job Cost Code # tbd

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Summary:

Wetlands are widely recognized as crucially important natural resources that provide a host of functions including flood control, water quality improvement, and support of biodiversity. Wetlands are a particularly significant part of the landscape in the northeastern U.S., which has a large amount of both coastal and freshwater wetland acreage. Nonetheless, wetlands are under constant threat of destruction or impairment, particularly from development and other construction activities. Regulations promulgated by the United States Environmental Protection Agency (USEPA) and the United States Army Corps of Engineers (USACOE) under the Clean Water Act protect wetlands, but USEPA Region 1 has limited resources for enforcement of these regulations. Because of this resource limitation and because state laws and regulations often overlap federal requirements, state wetlands enforcement staff are often the front lines in protecting wetlands in New England. In order to effectively implement laws that protect wetlands, these inspectors need a high level of technical knowledge and a thorough understanding of the various applicable federal and state regulations and enforcement tools.

The New England Interstate Water Pollution Control Commission (NEIWPCC) proposes to develop and provide training workshops for state wetlands inspectors in the New England region. The goal of this program is to train wetland inspectors in order to improve compliance with state and federal regulations, which will result in enhanced protection of wetlands. Specifically, the training is intended to:

- increase inspectors' understanding of the various federal and state regulations related to wetlands protection, including (but not limited to) Sections 401 and 404 of the Clean Water Act and storm water permitting for construction sites;
- increase inspectors' skill in applying the USACOE 1987 wetlands delineation manual, including delineation methods for challenging environments; and
- increase inspectors' knowledge of compliance tools (including enforcement actions, management practices to recommend, etc.) and skill in choosing the right tool(s) for each situation.

Increasing state inspectors' knowledge and skills as described will enhance collaboration between the states and EPA, because state inspectors will better understand jurisdictional issues, federal requirements, and federal enforcement priorities. In addition, state inspectors will be able to more effectively implement state laws, thus increasing wetlands protection and allowing EPA's enforcement staff to concentrate on cases that truly require federal intervention. The public will be served by better protection of natural resources and better dissemination of information about regulatory requirements.

NEIWPCC, founded in 1947, has a long history of facilitating collaboration among its member states (the New England states and New York) on water resources management issues. Among its activities, NEIWPCC organizes interstate work groups on specific topics, including a Wetlands Workgroup that has been in existence for over 15 years. NEIWPCC also has extensive experience providing training, in the form of short courses and symposiums, on a variety of environmental topics. Thus, NEIWPCC has the network of contacts and the staff capacity needed to efficiently develop and provide relevant training for state wetlands inspectors.

NEIWPCC proposes to develop and present a series of one- and two-day training modules over two years. NEIWPCC's compact member states ("the states"), USEPA, and USACOE will be consulted to identify the specific information that will most help inspectors effectively implement regulations. To provide the training, NEIWPCC will draw on the expertise and training assets of the states, USEPA, USACOE, the US Fish & Wildlife Service, the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service, and organizations such as the Association of State Wetlands Managers, regional professional groups, and universities. Appropriate experts will be identified to serve as trainers and NEIWPCC will work with these individuals to develop high-quality targeted training modules.

The tentative topics NEIWPCC has identified for training modules are listed below.

1. Regulations and Enforcement (2 days): This course will be jointly taught by USEPA, USACOE, and state agency personnel. Key federal and state regulations affecting wetlands will be covered, including discussion of jurisdictional issues. Topics will include regulations promulgated under Sections 401 and 404 of the Clean Water Act, storm water permitting for construction sites, state wetlands laws, and the effect of recent court decisions. The "Enforcement" component will include a segment on case development, which will cover topics such as record-keeping, documenting the file, and some "dos" and "don'ts" for field inspectors.
2. Advanced Wetland Delineation Using the ACOE 1987 Manual (2 days): This course will be taught by a team of wetland delineation experts (from state and federal agencies, consulting firms, and/or universities). It will include classroom instruction and a hands-on field practicum, and will cover some of the challenging aspects of wetland delineation in New England, including soil, vegetation, and hydrologic indicators.
3. Wetland Delineation at Disturbed Sites (2 days): This course will be taught by state agency staff and others with specific expertise and experience delineating wetlands in disturbed environments,

as presented in Section F of the USACOE 1987 manual. Topics will include aerial photo interpretation, identification of hydric soils in disturbed situations, and typical plants of disturbed wetland environments.

4. Best Management Practices for Erosion Control (1 day): This course will cover topics such as the impacts of erosion and Best Management Practices at construction sites to control erosion and prevent sediment pollution of wetlands and water bodies.

Work Plan:

Planning: NEIWPCC will establish a Wetlands Training Subcommittee within its existing Wetlands Workgroup to discuss training priorities, refine and/or modify the proposed training topics, and develop a training plan and schedule consistent with state priorities and operating constraints. NEIWPCC will work with the Wetlands Training Subcommittee to identify the proper instructors and locations for the four training modules. NEIWPCC anticipates presenting each training module multiple times in varying locations, in order to provide convenient locations for staff from all the New England states to attend. As necessary, NEIWPCC will reimburse the travel expenses of state agency staff associated with attendance at the trainings.

Curriculum Design: The curriculum will be designed by NEIWPCC based on recommendations from the Wetlands Training Subcommittee. NEIWPCC will work with the selected trainers to develop the specific agenda and materials for each module. Modules will be developed concurrently but finalized and presented sequentially.

Conducting the Training: NEIWPCC will oversee and coordinate all aspects of the training including advertising to the proper audiences, registration, logistical arrangements, scheduling, and printing of course materials.

Evaluation: NEIWPCC will do in-depth evaluation of all modules and of the training as a whole. Evaluations received from attendees each time a module is presented will be used to modify the next presentation of that module as well as subsequent modules. Final evaluations of all modules and the training as a whole will be submitted to EPA.

Dissemination of Training Materials and Project Information: NEIWPCC will submit all training curriculum materials, as well as videos of the trainings and evaluations, to EPA as deliverables. In addition, NEIWPCC will make training materials available on its website (<http://www.neiwpcc.org>).

Results/Outcome: Measuring the Success of the Project: NEIWPCC will measure the success of the "State Wetland Inspector Training" project using the measures listed below.

1. We will report the number of staff from each state trained with each module.
2. Where applicable and possible, we will have participants engage in self-tests or group tests of their knowledge/skill at the beginning and end of a training session; we will report results as increase in knowledge/skill.
3. As part of their module evaluations, participants will be asked to rate on a quantitative scale their level of agreement (e.g., from 1 [strongly disagree] to 5 [strongly agree]) with statements about how much they learned. These statements will be specific to each module, for example:
 - "I improved my understanding of state and federal regulations pertaining to wetlands."
 - "I increased my skill and confidence in delineating wetlands in disturbed environments."
4. We will survey participants 3 - 6 months after completion of each module to evaluate improvements in their job performance related to the training. Participants will be asked to rate on a quantitative scale their level of agreement with statements such as the following:

- “I have increased my level of communication with federal wetlands staff.”
- “I have greater confidence in the wetland delineations I have performed.”
- “I work more quickly because of my increased skill at wetland delineation.”
- “I have used my knowledge of erosion control BMPs to provide assistance in compliance with wetlands and storm water regulations.”

Project Milestones:

The estimated milestones below assume that EPA-funded work on the project can begin by January 1, 2003. In addition to the deliverables listed, NEIWPCC will submit periodic progress reports following the schedule and format requested by EPA.

2003

April 1	Training plan completed Deliverable: Training Plan
September 1	First module developed, presented at least once Deliverable: Training Agenda/Curriculum
November 1	Second module developed, presented at least once Deliverable: Training Agenda/Curriculum

2004

February 1	Deliverable: Videos, evaluations, and final curriculum materials from Modules 1 and 2
May 1	Third module developed, presented at least once Deliverable: Training Agenda/Curriculum
August 1	Fourth module developed, presented at least once Deliverable: Training Agenda/Curriculum
October 1	All workshops completed
November 15	Deliverable: Videos, evaluations, and final curriculum materials from Modules 3 and 4
December 31	All project work complete Deliverable: Final project report including evaluation of measures of success.

Project Period: January 1, 2003 – December 31, 2004

Wetlands Training Resource Requirements	0.45 FTEs
QA/QC Plan Required? No	
Total Program Cost (tbd)	\$147,600